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TECHNICAL TENDENCIES OF CARICATURE


BY HENRY MCBRIDE

With original illustrations by Gustave Verbeek.



JUST what caricature is and just who are our caricaturists are questions delicately to be decided if one chooses to back up assertions with bona-fide names. If we approach the subject with grave enthusiasm or respectful awe, saying nice things in opening sentences about George Du Maurier and Aubrey Beardsley, or Steinlen and Willette, almost any one, from our own C. D. Gibson down,

would be willing and pleased to be placed in such agreeable company. But the same importance and zeal, if spent upon a consideration, say, of the young people who occupy more or less de-
 c o m i c p e r i o d i c a l s ,
 protestations from
 might thoughtlessly
 and thus seem to put



of the young people who oc-
 c u p y m o r e o r l e s s d e -
 c a t a b l e p o s i t i o n s u p o n o u r
 would call forth shrugs and
 proper people whom one
 speak of in the same breath,
 into the same class.



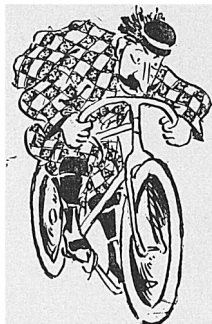
of the young people who occupy
batable positions upon our
would call forth shrugs and
proper people whom one
speak of in the same breath,
into the same class.

Caricature, then, is a reflection given to it. For caricatures are not facts; they are impressions, impressions to emphasize every desirable. Emphasis is the addition of force. So names I may mention, that my in- orable; and even should I, in the speak quietly of the wonderful I stir up his ever-to-be-expected my other victims, must acquit me of perhaps (I am discreet), I may keep this. His quarrels and platitudes cature extant, but his actual work is very far removed from his daily do

is a word that has meaning according to the in-
For myself, I mean by it the forcing of characteris-
pression. Expression is an admirable quality and
phatic expression is none the less expression be-



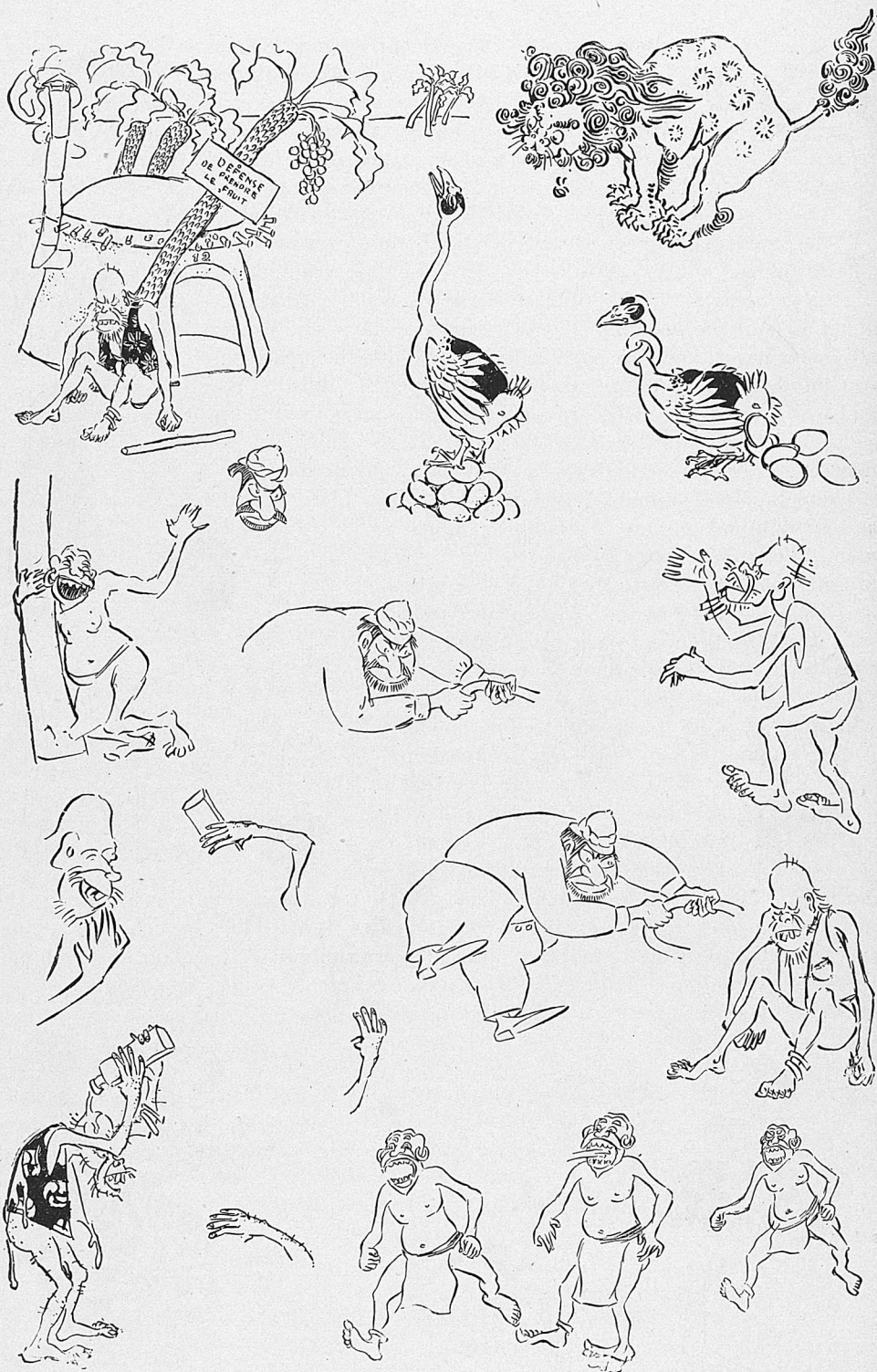
you see, you whose
tentions are most hon-
course of a page or two,
Whistler; even should
wrath against me, you,
wilful hurt; but then,
Mr. Whistler out of
are the best bits of cari-

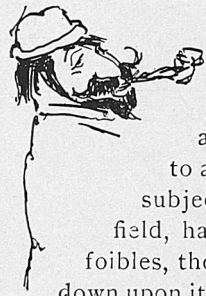


l from his daily doings. One can almost hear him denying emphasis a place in art, at all; his love of value is so intense.

But its very emphasis is what gives caricature its reason to be, its dominant utility. Centuries ago it became a political weapon. In every country it has brought into its makeup philosophy and knowledge, satire and fun, to barb shafts aimed at injury and injustice. In England, Hogarth and those who, while wearing his mantle, made drawings to accompany the stories of Dickens, held sway so







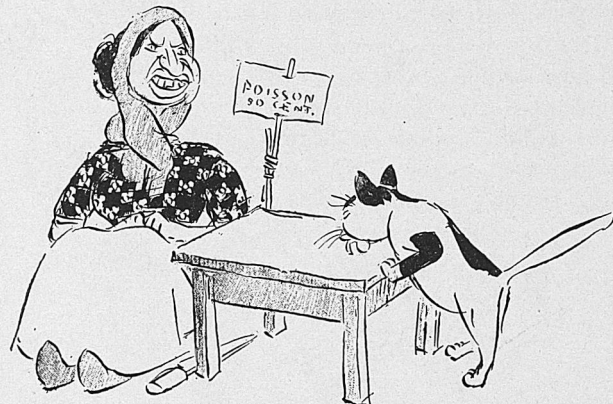
long that it is only recently the world has realized the filling of old places by new men. In France, Gavarni, Daumier and Grevin have worthy successors, and Germany and America have men saying all sorts of things to all sorts of people. Motives have changed and subjects altered. Politics, *par et simple*, as a battlefield, have given precedence to the mockery of social foibles, though anything involving a public wrong brings down upon itself, as of old, a fusillade from the caricaturist-champions of the people. The work in these days, and especially in America, concerns itself chiefly with attacks upon narrow-mindedness, stupidity, anglomania, hypocrisy and the like; and while always unmistakable in intention is so bathed in right feeling and good sense that one might readily suspect that the Japanese, who have so long influenced us in methods, have also influenced our motives.



The Japanese, indeed, have been the main factors in the technical evolution so visibly going on among all our draughtsmen. To be sure, we all go to France to be taught, but it is not always France who teaches us. Even nearer than France to the fountain of life is the island of Nippon. Without genuineness, without freedom from affectation, no art can be. In a rigid subjection to the vitality of the business at hand, the Japanese have simplified their work to a degree that amazes our complex

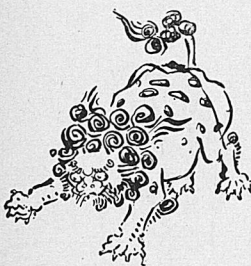


natures. The literature of her art may be but dimly understood by us, but the manner had only to be seen to be recognized as right. The French were almost the first to see it, and their caricaturists were the first to proclaim it. Some of them, De Toulouse-Lautrec, for instance, were quick to make it the excuse for something quite un-



Japanese. Forain, in reducing to the complete expression of his idea the tremendous knowledge that he brings to any subject, is after all more truly *en train*. It is the same old difference between principle and receipt. Forain, with his subjection of knowledge to simplicity, and the Japanese, who add to this the insistence of a comprehension of beauty and the picturesque, are largely responsible in England for those who are chiefly in vogue at present, namely: Aubrey Beardsley, Maurice Griffenhagen, L. Raven Hill, Phil May.

The accompanying sketches by Gustave Verbeck, who, when in Paris, belongs to the coterie who call themselves "chatnoiresque," are so all-around Japanese that one is tempted at first glance to shout, "Trickery!" But the undeniable

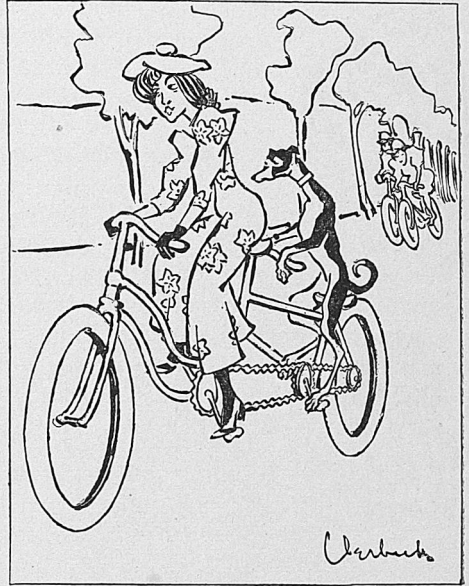


facts that Verbeck, though of American parents, and now living in New York, was born in Japan, and lived there during his early life, make some things in him comprehensible. I say "him," in that his drawings are completely he. Those presented herewith are for the most part fragments and studies for drawings that have appeared in *Le Chat Noir*. Wonderfully pretty girls are in some of them,





and sometimes wonderfully fearful animals. Usually in the completed drawings, the fearful animals have evil designs upon the unoffending maidens; but just when you give mademoiselle up for lost in drawing number three, lo! in drawing number four mademoiselle has a brilliant idea, in number five eludes the beast, and in number six rides out of the picture upon her bicycle, smiling serenely. Virtue always is rewarded, beauty is always befriended, thriftiness is commended and thieves are invariably caught, in this admirable country that Mr. Verbeck knows and draws so well.



And how absurdly ridiculous are those curly-haired lions, with their manes frizzed, and their tails crinkled and the hair on the tips of their ears brushed straight up! And those tigers, with their tails like a rosary of disconnected black beads! There are human suggestions about them, just as the faces of the old tramps look like those of the brutes they really are.

Caricature, by its slight exaggeration, is sometimes nearer the real truth than accurate portraiture!



This may be one secret of our enjoyment, and there is a certain everyday humanity—a kind of racy truth—in the actual ugliness of the “pretty girl” in the spotted gown which variously disports herself here, because we have seen her and known her, and we are not called upon to make the discounts that are demanded of us in the “pretty girl” of the ordinary illustration. The carelessness of the caricaturist, who need not trouble himself to be quite right in drawing, often helps him to do, and us to see things in his rapid sketch which laborious effort would probably miss. What care in drawing would express what we read in the half-scratched figure of those frantic skaters?

